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C O N F I D E N T I A L ASHGABAT 000215

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SCA/CEN AND INL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/12/2019

TAGS: [KTIP](#) [KCRM](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SMIG](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: TRAFFICKING 101: PROSECUTING
ATTORNEYS LACK KNOWLEDGE OF TIP ISSUES, BUT SEEK U.S.
EXPERTISE AND TRAINING

REF: A. A: STATE 132759

[1](#)B. B: TANGBORN/BUHLER E-MAILS OF 2/11/09

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Richard M. Miles. Reasons: 1.4(b) and
(d)

[1](#)1. (SBU) In preparing Post's submission of the annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report, Poloff met this week with representatives of the General Prosecutor's office in Ashgabat to raise a number of the questions posed in Ref A. It was Post's first consultation with the prosecutor's office for purposes of the report: Past reports have relied primarily on information gleaned from international organizations or local NGOs who assist trafficking victims as part of their work.

[1](#)2. (C) Four attorneys from the General Prosecutor's office attended, including the head of the International Relations section, two senior prosecutors, and one forensics specialist. All four were articulate and very well-versed in matters of law, although a bit stumped at time by some of the TIP-related questions. As a result, some of the answers they provided were not particularly responsive to the questions. They were unwavering, however, in their assertion that, to date, there have been no known trafficking cases in Turkmenistan. (NOTE: Post has learned via other sources of at least 20 suspected human trafficking cases involving Turkmen citizens last year. According to IOM, 80 percent of those cases reportedly involved young women who traveled to Turkey and fell victim to sexual exploitation schemes. END NOTE.)

[1](#)3. (C) During a discussion of the distinction between human smuggling and human trafficking, it was clear that our interlocutors did not possess a clear understanding of either. Even more striking was a statement by one of the senior prosecutors that a Turkmen woman who had traveled to Turkey several years ago and fallen victim to a prostitution scheme (he emphasized that the perpetrators in that case were not from Turkmenistan and that the wrongdoing occurred entirely in Turkey) was rightfully "prosecuted" for her crimes when she later returned to Turkmenistan.

[1](#)4. (SBU) The International Relations section chief, Batyr Batyrov, noted several times during the discussion that their office relies on the experience of foreign diplomatic missions in developing the expertise of their staff in TIP matters. Poloff proposed that the Embassy collaborate with them on training or other anti-TIP activities. The Turkmen officials also asked whether Turkmen law enforcement officials might seek the "help" of U.S. law enforcement to

investigate or question a witness or person of interest in the United States. Likewise, they asked whether a Turkmen citizen whose rights had been violated in the United States could seek redress in a U.S. court once they had returned to Turkmenistan. Post relayed both queries to the Department (ref B).

¶5. (C) COMMENT: The Turkmen prosecutors' statements about trafficking (i.e. denying the problem exists at all) and prostitution showed both an apparent naiveté about the problem and a cultural bias vis--vis victims of sexual exploitation. Nevertheless, all appeared very interested in working with Post to further their understanding and expertise on the issue. END COMMENT.
MILES